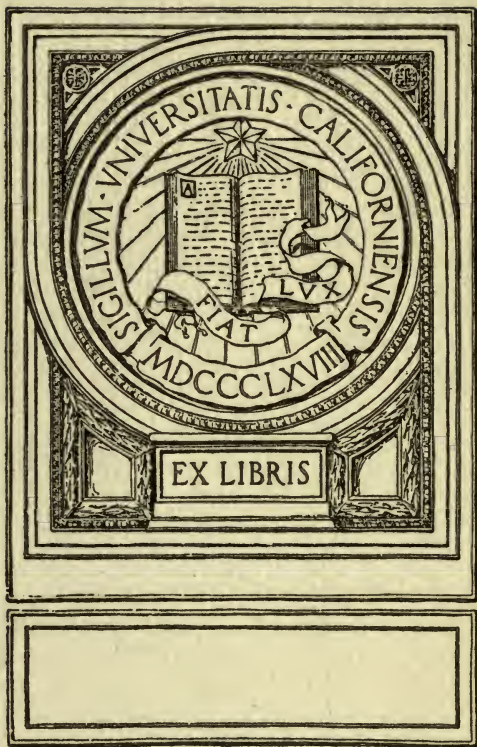


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IN
LAWS OF SEX

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TRAINING OF THE YOUNG

IN

LAWS OF SEX

BY
REV. THE HON E. LYTTTELTON

(Head Master of Eton College)

AUTHOR OF 'MOTHERS AND SONS' ETC.

'Thus it is plainly conceivable that creatures without blemish, as they came out of the hands of God, may be in danger of going wrong: and so they may stand in need of the security of virtuous habits, additional to the moral principle wrought into their natures by Him'

BP. BUTLER

'In the moral life there is indeed an extinction or annulling of the individual private self with all its desires and impulses: but it is an extinction or annulling which takes place not by extirpating those desires, but by transmuting them'

PRINCIPAL CAIRD

Μὴ νικῶ ὑπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ, ἀλλὰ νίκα ἐν τῷ ἀγαθῷ τὸ κακόν
ST. PAUL

NINTH IMPRESSION

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PREFACE

Two reasons only have induced me to publish this little book. The first is, that the need for some such suggestions as are here ventured is becoming more widely felt every year. The second is, that an article in the 'International Journal of Ethics,' of which this is an expansion, has been judged by friends to be likely to meet that need.

The scope of this essay has been carefully narrowed to two divisions of one subject: the disastrous results which follow from neglect of home teaching about life and birth; and the way in which such teaching may be given. It

would have been interesting, and perhaps not useless, to add an enquiry into some questions often included in discussions about social purity, such as the indirect effects of home training generally, of amusements, athletics, diet, literature, and so forth. But the handling of these topics must be to a large extent conjectural, and in this book I have tried to bring forward only those arguments that are as free as the theme allows from uncertainty. Moreover, what parents are anxiously seeking is a simple answer to these questions: Since our children are exposed to the risk of gathering vicious ideas about life and birth, ought we not ourselves to forestall the danger by giving wholesome teaching? And, if so, how is this to be done? The essay treats these two questions in order.

It may well be that this restriction of range will give to some readers a certain impression of exaggeration and overstrain. But the gain in definiteness will perhaps compensate.

The slight hesitation as to the difficulties in the way of practical action which I still felt when beginning to write vanished entirely before the book was finished. Much that is deepest and most hopeful in modern writing seems to teach us that we shrink, quite without reason, from a subject which in itself is full of nobleness, purity, and health.

E. LYTTELTON.

NEW YEAR'S DAY,
1900.

TRAINING OF THE YOUNG

IN

LAWS OF SEX

THE NEED

It would be impossible to name any subject of such general importance and interest as this, on which so little has been said; the reasons being that the interest and importance of the subject are outweighed by its difficulty, and that while the dangers of speaking are patent to the most superficial reflection, the far greater dangers of reticence are not to be understood without prolonged observation and much thought. Hence in

dealing with the question, How to instruct the young in knowledge of sex, life, and birth I feel that I am entering on almost untrodden ground which craves the most wary walking, and, to drop the metaphor, it is a subject in which any brilliant or confident utterances would be out of place. The matters with which we have to deal require tentative investigation, analysis, and balancing of opposite opinions. It is not so much guidance of others that I would attempt, but exploration.

It seems then, *a priori*, that a young human being who, by the natural laws of growth, is to enter on the possession of certain powers, and to be exposed to the temptation of grievously misusing them, should receive timely advice as to the right use of these powers and the

meaning of them. This broad observation applies to all boys and girls, and with more force to the former than to the latter. But no sooner does a parent or a teacher seriously contemplate the imparting of this advice than he is checked by a strong misgiving which agrees with a still stronger instinct. The misgiving is lest he may suggest to his innocent-minded children some of the darker facts of life before it is necessary or advisable that they should know of them. The instinct within him is his own reserve. So it has come about, though to a less extent than formerly, that a vast majority of the young of both sexes are left to gather the knowledge of sexual laws in a haphazard way, either from companions or from books, or from observation of the animal world. It

is still very widely felt that instruction on this subject, however reasonable in theory, is such as the human mind has a fatal power of turning into poison, and so the instruction is not given. Let us consider the broad effects of this policy of reticence on the two sexes separately.

The case of boys differs from that of girls in two ways: the effect of school life upon them is more telling and more inevitable; also their bodily growth is far more likely to stir animal desires. In the school life of boys, in spite of very great improvements, it is impossible that sexual subjects should be wholly avoided in common talk. Much liberty is allowed, and general curiosity prevails, and a still more general ignorance, and, though in preparatory schools of little

boys under fourteen the unceasing vigilance of masters and constant supervision combined with constant employment reduce the evil of prurient talk to a minimum, yet these subjects will crop up, and whatever is said about them will be the outcome of ignorance and probably morbidness of mind. It should be remembered that the boys who are talkative about such subjects are just those whose ideas are most distorted and vicious. Suppose five out of fifty have been wisely instructed by their parents; they are the very ones who are sure to keep silence, because they are aware of a certain depth and sacredness in all that concerns life and birth, and besides they are not impelled to chatter by an eager curiosity which moves the others. Hence in any school the only boys who

could handle the matter with thoroughly good feeling and truth are those who refuse to speak of it at all. And, even if all silly bad talk were suppressed, which is hardly conceivable, it is to be observed that the result is even then wholly negative. There is nothing gained or stored up in the way of sound knowledge to meet the manifold perils of the near future, but instead of that the mind is a chamber 'empty, swept and garnished,' from which intrusive thoughts have been kept at bay with the utmost difficulty for a time. But in the public school, owing not only to freer talk and more mixed company, but to the boy's own wider range of vision, sexual questions, and also those connected with the structure of the body, come to the fore and begin to occupy more or less of the

thoughts of all but a peculiarly constituted minority of the whole number. Thus under the conditions of general ignorance and curiosity the treatment of the subjects of the propagation of life and the functions of the human body relating to that wonderful power is quite certain to be faulty, misleading, wholly without proportion, and probably immoral, in that the boys most inclined to talk about them are those who either have gained a smattering of information from low companions or have pieced together with a morbid cleverness fragmentary and inaccurate observations culled from books and the animal world.

It is, however, so easy to be misunderstood in this matter that I must insert a caution against an inference which may be drawn from these words, viz. that

(school life is the *origin* of immorality among boys. The real origin is to be found in the common predisposition to vicious conceptions which is the result of neglect. Nature provides in almost every case an active curiosity on this subject, and that curiosity must be somehow allayed, and if it were not allayed at school false and depraved ideas would be picked up from casual companions at home, and when once that is done more or less defilement, possibly only in thought, is merely a question of time. Without instruction there can be no surety of defence against this, whatever the boy's surroundings are. On the other hand the influences of school life have been found to be impotent to deprave the tone of a boy who has been fortified by the right kind of instruction from his

parents. There is no need to minimise the danger. Some of the temptations of school life, especially those due to the separation of the sexes, are such as to test the weak points in any boy's armour. But as far as my experience has gone of boys who have been well equipped with wholesome teaching at home, they are not to be corrupted by others. More will be said on this later. At present I only wish to insist on this : that if a child's mind, which is admittedly most receptive of *any* information on life and birth, is tainted and debased by greedily imbibing vicious ideas, it is quite a mistake to attribute the resulting evil to the surroundings. The cause of it is the neglect which precedes exposure to the surroundings, and so readily does an ignorant mind at an early age take in

teaching about these subjects that there are no conceivable conditions of modern social life not fraught with grave peril to a young boy if once he has been allowed to face them quite unprepared either by instruction or by warning. And this manifestly applies to life at home or in a day school or in a boarding school to an almost equal degree.

Moreover, and this is perhaps the most serious fact of all, the point of view taken by boys if left to themselves must inevitably be selfish. This will be seen at once if the second of the two conditions incident to boyhood be taken into account: the normal growth of animal desires, far stronger in the male than in the female, at least in England. At varying ages these desires make themselves felt, in a very large number of cases

most imperiously, in some few quite irresistibly. Ordinarily at fifteen and sixteen years of age, the will-power being still weak, the bodily desires are almost at their height; if they increase later on, there is also an increase in will-power and in prudence, so that, normally, the dangers of misuse are less from seven-teen years onwards. Now, this fact of growth, by itself, would make it difficult for a boy to contemplate what he has heard of sexual relations, paternity, sexual indulgence, and so forth, from anything but a selfish point of view. At the time of puberty, mysteriously and silently the great fact of personality asserts itself, and often produces a puzzling shyness and a reserve which sometimes struggles for utterance but cannot find it. This causes the view of life to be coloured and inter-

puted by the claims of self, and to this is to be attributed the not very uncommon lapse into *temporary* insanity at this period, which manifests itself in very various and often, of course, innocuous forms—rowdiness, moodiness, silence, &c.—but occasionally in deceptiveness, dishonesty, arson, homicide, or suicide. But how much more inevitably is this selfish colouring given to the facts of sex, &c., when no wholesome counterbalancing knowledge of any kind whatever is given, but when every single suggestion and hint on the subject has come from those who are under the same potent influences of ignorance, curiosity, and the claims of self! It is significant to note that of no other subject whatever can this be said. Whatever else a boy learns either is impersonal and unexciting, such as Euclid or

geography, or else is presented from an altruistic point of view, such as when history-lessons stimulate patriotism; and, again, games are chosen for him which require co-operation and the subordination of self to the interests of the house or school. Only in sexual questions, where curiosity is, even in innocent-minded boys, very powerful, and where selfishness is almost insured by the violence of animal desires, frequently normal, frequently pampered by over-feeding, is ignorance permitted, and no attempt made to invest the subject in its proper dignity and in close relation to the welfare of others and to universal law.

Yet once more. After the stormy period of youth comes matrimony, and the last phase of the deep and delicate

subject of the relation of the sexes is entered upon. Again, quite inevitably, the man enters upon it as if his welfare and convenience were by far the most important matters for his concern; and so when problems come before him for settlement, as they almost invariably do, demanding the finest adjustment of mutual conjugal claims, and on his part real readiness of concession and discipline of will, he deals with these problems not only selfishly but in a grossly uninstructed fashion: in ignorance of the meaning of self-control and of the results of indulgence. It is true that good-heartedness, love, and a *felix temperamentum* will carry many safely through these perils. But still there is a huge amount of woful and preventable waste of married happiness, due to

debased thought and ignorance, which is the direct result of the prevailing reticence on sexual questions.

Such, quite briefly stated, seem to be some of the effects on boys and men of the policy of reticence. It will hardly be disputed that of all the awful evils which wait upon the violation of sexual morality—used in its broadest sense—by far the larger portion is due to the initiative and motive power of the male sex. If, then, the reasoning is correct which points to the license of men as due to the falseness of their ideas of all sexual matters from childhood onwards, it will be seen how tremendous is the indictment to be brought against the still common practice of leaving boys to gather in a fitful and uncertain fashion for themselves stray fragments of vitiated information on the

most vital of all truths that lie within their comprehension.

But it is advisable to make as sure as possible that the truth is as I have stated it; and therefore I propose now, in order to bring the facts into clearer relief, to retrace my steps to some extent, and to scan more closely some plain and undisputed symptoms in the mental growth of the boy as he passes from childhood to adolescence.

Every year scores and scores of children are born into the world with certain very beautiful and clearly marked characteristics. They are innocent of impurity, indescribably eager for wholesome knowledge, perfectly trustful of their parents, and though self-absorbed, are capable of being easily trained to a tone of mind to which sympathy is

congenial and cruelty abhorrent. Such a description is literally true of the great majority of quite young children, and we believe that qualities such as these elicited the great saying 'Of such is the kingdom of heaven.'

But after a few years a change has taken place. Whereas the boy-child's knowledge on other subjects is on the whole healthy and edifying, that which he has learnt about generation and birth turns to poison within him. It has somehow become a matter for uneasy dissimulation, for eager, prying curiosity covered by an affected indifference ; for frequent low talk with companions whom he despises, and a shame-faced reserve among those whom he respects. So much is obviously the case with a very large number. But if we look a little below the surface other

and still more lamentable developments disclose themselves. The child at one time was accustomed to trust his parents for guidance into all knowledge. He took his little difficulties straight to them : he clamoured for answers to every sort of question, especially to those concerning God's dealings with mankind, and the processes of life and decay in the animal and vegetable kingdom. But now he has discovered that to one set of questions, those connected with subjects of quite unique and supreme interest to himself, no satisfactory answer ever comes. Palpable evasions, fables, and nonsense, which he despises all the more heartily because he feels that a year or two ago they would have contented him, are all that he can get or hope to get from those whom he is told to love and reverence, and on whom

he is naturally inclined to lean. If he were capable of reflection he would think it beyond anything strange that his teachers should utterly fail him not in matters which have a slight hold on his imagination and thought, but just in those which make a potent appeal to his interests and emotions, facts beyond any facts wonderful, and clothed in a mystery which seems to brood over large tracts of human life. But he cannot reflect, so he holds his peace and questions his parents no more, turning his attention meantime to other sources of information. And in all cases his confidence in his parents' power to guide him through life is disturbed to its foundations. Perhaps he has almost consciously learnt to distrust their spoken word, or at least he has found out

that their willingness to help him, to show him the great laws of the universe, which in some form or other he is always enquiring after, is not proportioned to his sense of need; for just where that need was the keenest the refusal of help was most complete.

It is very common to hear parents, or at least mothers, complaining sadly but resignedly about a kind of estrangement that takes place between their sons and themselves after a certain interval of school life. Hitherto the confidence between them—so they thought—was complete. But, almost as if inevitably, the openness and candour of the child becomes slightly clouded, and nothing perhaps in any ordinary experience is more pathetic and distressing than the sequel of this.

Strangers yet!

After childhood's winning ways,
After care and blame and praise,
Counsel asked and wisdom given,
After mutual prayer to Heaven,
Child and parent scarce regret
When they part—are strangers yet.

The reason is that the boy has learnt that the region of life which no home teaching has touched is one filled with a strange and lurid interest of its own. There is something unhallowed and dangerous about it: so much he instinctively feels. But knowledge is knowledge after all, and if these tainted sources are not the best he anyhow knows no others: and his parents seem to have designedly put him in the way of picking up what he can after this casual fashion; they must, of course, be well aware of the kind of talk that goes on away from home, either at school or else-

where. And yet as he feels this he is conscious of a puzzling contradiction. Somehow the atmosphere of home seemed different from that in which he is now moving, and yet his father placed him here. But he soon gives up all attempt to explain this. Life must be lived: things must be learnt, and the little boy feels that he is exercising something of a right in filling up as best he can the gap in his knowledge which his parents have left a yawning void, only placing him in surroundings where it must soon be filled up somehow or other. And it is filled up, but at the cost of a more or less complete destruction of innocence and of his trustfulness in his parents. That is to say, the two most lovable of the qualities with which he started life are not observable to any-

thing like the same extent as before. His mother may not know why this is so. The only thing she may be perfectly certain of is that the loss will never be quite made up as long as life shall last.

This is the state of things till the age of twelve or thirteen. Soon after that comes a fresh set of trials and disturbances, already alluded to, due to bodily growth.¹ It has already been pointed out that the age at which this occurs is one at which

¹ The age of the beginning of adolescence varies from about twelve years till nearly twenty. One of the best indications is the cracking of the voice, but general physical precocity or the reverse can easily be observed. Very rarely in England the treble voice wholly disappears before thirteen. Sometimes, however, choristers sing till seventeen, and in other few cases the usual signs of puberty are not observed till nineteen. The average age appears to be between fourteen and a half and fifteen and a half. Men whose youthful experience has been exceptional will be inclined to differ from some of the above statements, where the normal cases have been kept in view.

the claims of self are very strongly asserted by nature. Egoism in all its many unhealthy later growths seems to take its beginning from this time of life, and, by what seems a hard necessity, the natural changes in the constitution are just those which almost compel the thoughts in one direction. It is true that this is not universal. Through this most critical time of growth there is a favoured minority in whom the change takes place apparently unnoticed. That is to say, the mind is enlarged, the view of life deepened, and the childish naïveté disappears, and very often a certain sentimentality for a time takes its place ; but the character is wonderfully preserved from unwholesome taint, and though the glad childish objectivity passes away and more or less of self-consciousness super-

venes, yet the gain is greater than the loss. Growth and experience and social influences are likely to work favourably. But it must be most emphatically stated that there are only a few to whom these words apply. It is indeed, considering all things, surprising that there are any at all.

Again, there is another section of the whole number, also a small minority, who equally with the last may be neglected in a general consideration of this subject. They are those who without reflection and with a wilful persistency give themselves over to indulgence of one sort or another, and seem when the inevitable catastrophe comes as if nothing could have saved them. I am convinced that even of these a certain proportion would be

safeguarded by adequate home influence ; but, be this as it may, we are now concerned with the great majority lying between these two classes, and of these it may be said that though under favourable conditions of active employment and healthy corporate interests the outer appearance of their life during the time of transition is tranquil and commonplace, yet under the surface a storm is going on. How could it be otherwise ? Nature forces on their attention certain phenomena about which they know nothing except that they belong to a subject not to be mentioned at home and which is provocative of a kind of talk elsewhere which they dimly discern to be bad. It is no object of this paper to descant upon the sad, baneful physical results to which this state of things directly leads. But

let the situation be calmly considered in its effect on the character of the growing lad. Part of his life, of his thoughts, words, and deeds, he learns that he must keep concealed from all human beings whom he respects, but that he may divulge it to those for whose good opinion he does not really care. Open truthfulness of character is, of course, rendered difficult and in many cases is perceptibly marred. But this is not all. It is quite impossible that the young man's feeling towards law and moral obligation can be quite strong and wholesome when for some years he finds himself the victim of an insoluble contradiction. On the one hand there are growing instincts within him which must be attended to; on the other there is the recollection of his home life, where any allusion to this

cardinal fact in his experience is prohibited. Now it may safely be said that the kind of moral training which is sound and effectual is that in which the precepts enjoined upon a child by those whom he loves and respects are felt to be in keeping with the facts of life: to explain the varying experiences as they occur, and in turn to be illuminated by them. Where this is approximately secured the growing lad comes to learn that there is a deep harmony between reason and conscience—in other words, between science and religion. But this most desirable result is prevented when all that he has heard from home on the subjects of birth and generation is a vague warning not to think or talk about them, when his bodily growth compels him to do the first and his intellect urges him to the

second. (It cannot be too often repeated that a great deal of bad talk among boys arises from the simple desire of some of them for knowledge.) Thus there arises a conflict between commandments which have been given to him, invested in all the tender and uplifting associations of home, childhood, and parents' love, and those imperious claims which nature makes upon him, the hard facts of daily experience. What happens? The boy is powerfully impelled towards the conviction that the loftiest precepts of religion and morality are all very well for those whose lives they may concern—women and others whose trials are quite different from his own—but that for him his early training, in spite of a certain sanctity with which it has been imbued, can never be a source of strength and a

real guidance through life, for the simple reason that in the most intimate, the most puzzling, the most insistent of all life's difficulties it has been found wanting. In other words, if his early notions of right and wrong, of his duty to God and to his neighbour, are to gain and keep his allegiance, they must embrace and shed light on the first and greatest of the perplexities of boyhood, or they will be put aside and only deferred to when they cost nothing to obey.

There will be some, of course, to whom this picture will seem exaggerated and needlessly gloomy. They will point to several instances among their own acquaintance of young men who are apparently clean-minded, conscientious and loyal to their parents, and they will argue that if this reasoning be sound

there would be scarcely any men to be found who were not the contrary.

First, however, I would remark that in a casual and haphazard way many other influences tell upon a boy, and some of them very beneficially, before his character is finally fixed. For the sake of clearness I have isolated this one influence, the reticence of his parents on this one subject, and considered its natural working, as if there were no others that in any way determined his general moral attitude. But there is evidence that this particular influence is a powerful one and works in the direction indicated. The attitude of thousands of educated Englishmen towards religion, piety, and the law of self-control is remarkably like that above described. These matters are for them

not guiding principles, demanding their entire homage and obedience, but in a way ornamental helps to life, to be used if required. This tone of mind is exceedingly common, and something must have caused it: and among the different influences which may have combined to cause it I cannot doubt that the one we are considering has played a leading part.

It is not necessary to pursue this subject further, except to notice that the divorce between the home teaching and the facts of life is accentuated if the teaching of the parent is confined to a bald warning to keep away from bad companions and evil talk. In a great number of cases so much and no more has been done; and there is unquestionably a temporary gain. A boy will avoid

corrupting influences till the time of puberty begins, and for some time after he will try to keep his difficulties to himself. As far as his conduct during two or three years is concerned this is better than nothing, but still his estimate of the value of his home teaching is being lowered day by day. The truth is that the idea of the position which many parents form is extraordinarily erroneous. It is commonly held that while a child is kept at home all goes well, but that as soon as he goes to school every sort of temptation to unclean words and actions at once assails him ; accordingly if a severe or impressive warning be given at the outset the parent has done all that can be expected of him, and if anything goes wrong afterwards it is the fault of the school. Perhaps this easy

method of dealing with the question might be defended if only it were not necessary to take into account the intrusive claims of the body, due to natural healthy growth. They refuse to be ignored, and when one considers the meaning of them in relation to the power of propagating life it becomes clear that they *ought not* to be ignored: they ought to be understood, and they cannot be understood unless they are explained. But explanation of them is a very different thing from a mere warning against thinking and talking of them.

Lastly I would remind the reader that one of the child's early qualities was a susceptibility to training in the direction of considerateness and hatred of cruelty. On this point, again, it is often loosely said that all little boys are cruel. The

truth is that they often inflict pain from sheer ignorance, and so do little girls, and the chief difference is that girls have livelier imaginations and take a shorter time in learning that an animal suffers when it is tormented: but in the case of (both boys and girls it is necessary that interest in the dumb animal or insect should be excited; then personal experience should teach them what pain means, and after that it is quite natural for a small boy to treat animals with kindness, or children younger than himself. And again, as to boys of the rough and difficult age, as it is often thought to be, of fifteen or sixteen years, there are several families in which courtesy and considerateness to girls and ladies have been insisted on with success—quite enough, that is, to show that these

qualities are not in their nature alien to boyhood. They certainly require training, and, as I have said, the training consists chiefly in exciting sympathy and giving knowledge of pain; added to which unselfishness in little things has to be insisted on.

Now Englishmen of the present generation are the most humane people the world has ever seen. In spite of some hideous blemishes the treatment of animals in this country is full of kindness, which forms a startling contrast to that prevailing elsewhere. Again, it is not necessary to say that, as compared with others, we show a remarkable readiness to relieve distress and champion the cause of the downtrodden and afflicted in every quarter of the globe. Other nations fail to understand

this feeling, and simply laugh at us for it. But we know that on the whole it is genuine. There is, however, one subject, and one only, in which Englishmen as a people are as cruel as any foreigners. Such cruelty as we are habitually guilty of towards animals and birds is, after all, confined to certain groups of men or women, and constantly renewed protests are heard against these practices. But when the victims of man's cruelty are not birds or beasts, but our own countrywomen, doomed by the hundred thousand to a life of unutterable shame and hopeless misery, then and then only the general average tone of young men becomes hard and brutally callous, or frivolous with a kind of coarse frivolity not exhibited in relation to any other form of human suffering. It is true that one reads of

terrible waste of life in certain trades, and no doubt some employers of labour are criminally negligent. But the public opinion of both sexes is dead against all this; and if the horrors continue we know that it is simply because of ignorance: the light is not yet shed into the dark corners. But how many men ever trouble their heads about the 80,000 fallen women in one city alone? And it is idle to argue that this indifference is due to ignorance. There is no fact of our social life more vividly and persistently brought before the notice of any young man in London than the unspeakable tragedy of thousands of women sunk in an abyss of suffering and infamy. He cannot fail to see around him a whole world of ruined life: a ghastly varnish of gaiety spread over immeasurable tracts

of death and corruption; a state of things so heart-rending and so hopeless that on a calm consideration of it the brain reels, and sober-minded people who, from motives of pity, have looked the hideous evil full in the face have asserted that nothing in their experience has seemed to threaten them so nearly with a loss of reason. But in all classes of society young men, as a whole, those very youths who as children were one and all amenable to the ordinary impulses of pity and kindliness, are capable of joking on this subject, as if the victims of their own and others' lust were worth less than so many sheep; and even if they refrain from joking, the miserable support given to Rescue Societies and Penitentiary work shows plainly enough that they will not raise a

finger or spend a sixpence to relieve the anguish of a single suffering sister so long as she is an 'outcast.' This symptom of character may be explained in various ways; but the fact is undeniable: it is simply cruelty of a peculiarly brutal kind, and in no other relation of life is it to be discerned.

No doubt it may be said that, from reasons of delicacy, the subject is seldom mentioned in polite society, and so it comes about that the undisputed facts of the case are not brought home to young men's minds. There is truth in this, and I will recur to it later. But it leaves a great deal unexplained. If, as I have already implied, lads and young men frequently talk on such matters, how comes it that they are so blindly ignorant of the most patent and undeniable facts

—that they somehow suppose that ‘lost’ women have voluntarily given themselves to a life of sin; that the misery and privations of such a life are made up for by its excitement? In short, what is the reason why they propagate among each other huge and palpable lies on this one subject, lies framed to cloak the disagreeable truths which might otherwise come to light? Moreover it is quite a delusion to suppose that it is by young men alone that the truth of this matter is distorted or put out of sight. There are scores of ‘men of the world,’ fathers of boys at school, who show a real anxiety about their boys’ school career being free from scandal, and a lesser number who are anxious that it should be free from vice. But only a small percentage of these are anxious to

anything like the same extent that the same boys should be saved from the sin of fornication. There are reasons that might be given for this with which I am not concerned. The important thing to notice is that the question is settled wholly irrespective of the claim of women of the middle and lower classes to a fair measure of humane consideration. The conclusion arrived at may or may not be reasonable if it is entirely a question of how far the young man degrades himself by one moral evil or by the other; but the ordinary conventional accepted tone, used when the matter is being discussed by men, indicates with a lurid distinctness that they are blindly callous as to whether their decision is cruel or not. Such a state of mind is, no doubt, seen to be inconceivably stupid, when one

thinks of the moral problems involved; but greater than its stupidity is its cruelty. Or take another typical instance. A thoroughly conventional man in good society would sooner that his son should consort with prostitutes than that he should marry a respectable girl of a distinctly lower station than his own: indeed, it is not going too far to say that he probably would rather that his son should seduce such a girl, provided there were no scandal, than marry her. Now this tone of mind prevails in many fashionable circles. But the strange fact is that fashion as regards other matters is often irrational and indeed inexpressibly foolish, but there is no other department of life in which it is inhumanly cruel. It is worth observing that this state of things exists among a people

which subscribed hundreds of thousands of pounds for the relief of starvation in India. I should be the last to wish that that generous gift had been less; but what are the claims of a starving Hindoo compared to those of a respectably brought up English girl who has been ruined and flung on to the streets till she dies of destitution and disease at twenty-five years of age? Men who allow this to go on, on an enormous scale, and who speak and act in regard to it in accordance with a widely prevailing fashion, are guilty of an inhumanity which is not only very terrible, but is noteworthy for being manifested in this direction alone.

Perhaps it is worth while to notice briefly a kind of plea which may be set up against this contention. It may be said that not all immorality is cruel.

There are many men who sin against the law of continence who yet would never be guilty of seduction ; and, again, it is not uncommon for a man who can afford it to maintain relations with a woman for a time and afterwards make handsome provision for her and enable her to live quietly and respectably for the rest of her days. Putting on one side the question of the abstract right or wrong of such conduct, it seems hardly fair to stigmatise it as cruel.

This kind of excuse is, no doubt, common enough, but as hollow as any excuse can possibly be. Men do not sin to themselves alone. Suppose A. is rich enough to make a money provision for the woman he has chosen to consort with, what is the effect on B., who is impecunious ? Of course he reasons

with himself that if he had the money he would do likewise ; but, as he has not, he must find his opportunities for indulgence as best he can. In other words, A., while solacing himself with the belief that he can sin in a refined way and without ill-treating his victim, by his example urges on B. to swell the volume of vice which is both coarse and cruel. And, secondly, the view of womanhood implied in this plea is nothing but barbarous. The unhappy partners of a rich man's lust are beings born with the mighty power to love, and are endowed with deep and tender instincts of loyalty and motherhood. When these divine and lovely graces of character are utterly shattered and foully degraded, the man on whom all the treasure has been lavished tries to believe that he has made

ample reparation by an annuity of 50*l.* ! Of course two minutes' reflection would convince any one of the nature of this miserable mockery, and if he refuses to reflect on what he is doing, that is no palliation whatever of the cruelty. Lastly, if a young rake prides himself on refraining from seduction, and professes only to indulge himself where it does no harm, he forgets that he is adding again and again to the degradation and misery of individual human beings, plunging them deeper and deeper into ruin, besides strengthening the system which virtually enslaves English girls into this vile bondage. We may admit that there are degrees of heartlessness, but still inhumanity cannot go much further than classifying a whole multitude of fellow creatures as machines for men's selfish

pleasure, and then treating them so as to plunge them deeper into despair.

The shallowness of these excuses is indeed a strong proof of what is here maintained. Thoughtlessness beyond a certain point is criminal, and in no other department of life would such devastation and havoc be permitted on such flimsy pretexts. It remains to be seen if this sinister phenomenon is in any way to be explained.

The fundamental fact which goes far to explain it has already been stated (p. 10). The certain result of leaving an enormous majority of boys unguided and uninstructed in a matter where their strongest passions are concerned is that they grow up to judge of all questions connected with it from a purely selfish point of view.

Some influence has been allowed to operate deeply and persistently on man's nature. It must have been given unchecked scope for a long time; and it seems as if it must have gathered strength from very early years and have been entwined with all the most intimate associations and beliefs when the mind was shaping its creed and settling gradually its notions of life and its problems. All the evidence points towards this conclusion. Again, as has been remarked, in some strange and most deplorable way the influence has worked its effect in all that concerns one set of questions alone—those connected with sensuality. This again seems clear, and all the indications lead us directly to the one great flaw in the home education of the present day, in consequence of which young men have

been forced to face a peculiarly acute set of temptations with no guide but their own desires. There has been nothing whatever in their bringing up to counteract the claims of self, or to make them understand the woman's side of the question at all.

Hence, if, as we may assume, through the early years of adolescence the youth only considers the subject from the side of his own inclinations, and does not even form a faint picture in his own mind of all this wreckage and ruin around him, his callousness is partly explained ; and to obviate the evil some effort is being made by Purity Societies and by individuals to wake some sympathy in the minds of young men for outcast womanhood. My belief is that this has not been wholly unsuccessful. But some reflection will make it clear that if this is the

only preventive that is employed it is pretty sure to be in many cases inoperative, and to fall far short of the kind of safeguards that we are looking for. To begin with, it comes late in a young man's life. Perhaps at nineteen or twenty years of age he hears for the first time something of the true nature of the 'social evil.' What he hears certainly is for him a wholesome warning and a deterrent. But it is well known that warnings and appeals are totally useless when the mind and will have been too long set in one direction. And in the case of most boys by the time they hear this first appeal to their sense of chivalry they have been led to contemplate this particular problem of life—for ten years, perhaps—from the selfish point of view. Suddenly the current of their ideas is

interrupted by learning what pitiable havoc this particular selfishness works in the world, and of course the finer spirits among them are touched with a feeling of indignant pity and recognise the call to self-control. But, as a general rule, and owing partly to the influence of a degraded public opinion, any ordinary young man has long formed the idea that he has something of a right to gratify himself, if he chooses, in this way : and often the feeling has come to be too firmly fixed to be disturbed by any adventitious plea of the dues of others. There is something about such a plea too casual and fortuitous to allow of its exercising any lasting constraint. It might have been different, he feels, if this had been urged upon him by the right people at the right time and in the right way, but as it is can he be

expected to do violence to his own inclinations, to undergo keen and prolonged discomfort, and, indeed, as he is often told, injury to his own health at the bidding of strangers who, perhaps, do not know much about young men, and certainly do not know him and his trials? So, unless the voice that appeals for mercy and true manliness is one of far more than ordinary power, his temporary uneasiness is soon lulled : it can hardly be that the notions he has imbibed for years are all wrong ; how can he suppose that all his friends, even the best of them, are completely astray in taking for granted that men are to be thought of first? And if arrangements made to suit their desires are awkward and uncomfortable for others, still there the fact is : the desires are tremendously strong, and what is to

be done? And while he vacillates, deep down in his consciousness, too deep to be put into words, is the recollection that among all the grave and gentle warnings against selfishness of one kind or another which from the days of childhood and boyhood he can vividly recall, not one word was ever said to prepare him for the stern duty of this kind of self-control. He may have heard occasional cautions from others, now and again in a sermon or from the lips of a friend. But nothing has come to him invested with the suasive authority of home and bearing directly on the present trial. And yet his father must have known what was coming. He is not conscious of having lacked in other questions warning and teaching at home. The only possible inference, therefore, is that those who first implanted in his

mind the idea of duty must have thought that for him the moral law was complete without this very heavy addition. Nature has brought the question before him for a decision, and one of the commonest sayings among his acquaintance is that self-indulgence is natural. By the time the young man comes to reason in this way the battle is lost.

Of course this analysis is only true of some. There are many who give way to temptation without reflection. There are some who, equally without reflection, resist. But it is necessary above all things to be honest in facing facts. No sane man can deny the appalling frequency of moral collapse among young men, and the above is merely an attempt to indicate what in the majority of cases must be the kind of mental movement

which attends it. No doubt the preliminary doubts and hesitations vary, as also do the influences which ultimately settle the question the wrong way. But among those influences there is one which is found constant in almost every case: I mean the silence of parents as to this temptation, contrasted with their outspokenness on all others. It is absurd to suppose that a fact so singular can have had no effect. All evidence, all expert testimony, all science testifies to the lifelong permanence of the early home influence. And if that influence has been given ungrudgingly as a help against some trials and wholly denied against one only, the result is to leave the youth biassed in the latter case in the direction of natural desire, or at least inclined to acquiesce in the cruel con-

ventional standard of opinion, which is, of course, one of the most powerful of existing stimulants to evil.

This last remark anticipates an objection. It will be said that careful home training inculcates self-control as a principle, and even if the subject is not mentioned the boy is fortified by general habits of upright living, by a pure and wholesome atmosphere, and by religious teaching, so that when this special temptation comes he is equipped: he recognises the call to a struggle and braces himself bravely for it; *jam non consilio bonus sed more eo perductus ut non tantum recte facere possit, sed nisi recte facere non possit*. In other words, virtue, once implanted, deals with special difficulties by its own strength. Let a boy, therefore, be brought up to live

simply; to show consideration for others; to learn the joy of self-sacrifice, and he will take care of himself when the day of trial comes.

There are two remarks to be made on this. First, this sketch of home training is very rarely indeed more than partially fulfilled. It is an ideal, and when it is approximated to I fully admit that a youth faces life far better equipped than if his parents had not made efforts in this direction. It is possible that if all homes were of this sort the question we are considering would not have arisen. But what is the use of following out such a conjecture? The problem before us becomes exceedingly difficult and exceedingly urgent when we take in that a vast number of boys from good homes, some few from the very best, are beset by

temptations too heavy for them to meet without sore bewilderment of mind and a considerable defilement of thought; and again that very many parents with the best intentions, and with real anxiety to do what is right, contrive somehow to blunder in various important respects, so that their influence upon their children is far less than it ought to be. The practical question, therefore, is, supposing we are improving, as we trust we are, in the matter of home training, is nothing to be done meantime, but are we to wait till all homes are so full of refinement, love, and wisdom that all after-trials will easily be withstood by the children? I submit that to answer this in the affirmative and act upon it would be a policy both Utopian and foolish.

But the real answer is of a different

kind altogether. It will be noticed that the objection assumes any instruction on life and birth to be a thing, if possible, to be avoided—an intrusion of an unpleasant kind into the even tenor of home training. This assumption I must anticipate the conclusion of this paper by flatly denying. It is only natural that fathers, remembering what they have gone through in boyhood and youth, and prepossessed with the idea of the whole subject being necessarily wrapped up in an unhealthy mystery, should yield to the very common promptings of indolence and shyness and say nothing about it. But what if that idea of it be itself morbid and the outcome of morbid conditions in past life? One of the most courageous and true sayings ever uttered on this subject was spoken by Thring of

Uppingham to a Church Congress audience. 'The foremost fact of all the world as regards human nature to me is that the life of the human race is entrusted to sexual union.'¹ There is the tone of a healthy-minded prophet, and on the truth of that saying we may take our stand, and resolve to seek for some method of instruction which, so far from being prejudicial or disturbing to the general effect of the home training, will be found to be corroborative of all that is sound and pure and edifying; and with this object in view we may repeat Plato's well-known saying, 'The quest is a noble one, and the hope great.'

¹ The tone of the whole paper is very fine, and nowhere uncertain in its presentation of the principle that God's ordinance must be a pure thing, and requires pure and firm statement (*Church Congress Report*, 1884, p. 367).

Before proceeding, however, to the constructive part of this paper a word or two might seem necessary on the subject of girls. *Prima facie* any one who has not had any particular first-hand experience, but only judges of the state of the case from ordinary observation, in all probability would agree with the common opinion of educated Englishmen that here, if anywhere, there is wisdom in letting well alone. In spite of much restlessness in public opinion, especially in regard to subjects connected with the training of the young, there is a widespread feeling that the girls of our country who have had any advantages in their homes are in the majority of cases types of

Benignity, and home-bred sense,
Ripening in perfect innocence:

and it would seem the height of rashness

to do anything to alter what is so healthy and so fair.

I had it in my mind, when first sketching out this paper, to discuss this subject somewhat fully, and to point out how the principles which determine our duty to our sons apply quite directly to our daughters also; but finding that I should have to rely on some secondhand information entirely, I think it best to leave the question to others who have a better right to speak. One thing only I will say: Any careful enquiry, made among women of experience, into the needs and difficulties of girls will reveal the grave fact that it is even easier for parents to lull themselves into a mistaken acquiescence as to this sex than as to the other. I should conjecture that the psychological problems

to be answered are more complicated and obscure, and the evils of neglect to be less easily traced, but very nearly as serious.

But if the main principle for which I am contending be granted it will be allowed at once that the good of positive instruction, as an enlightenment to the mind and a powerful help towards a wise and reverent view of nature, is a good which parents have no reason for withholding from their daughters any more than from their sons. Later on I hope to make it plain that wise teaching is so natural and so free from the least kind of wrong suggestion as to be really desirable for any child, no matter if there is less urgency in some cases than in others.

A very thorny question, however, on which some discussion has taken place

in magazines and elsewhere, comes before us in connexion with marriage. Granting what has been already said about the comparative immunity of girls from temptation, should not something be said when the time of possible matrimony is at hand to prevent a young woman from surrendering herself to a husband in ignorance of the full meaning of marriage?

Interesting, however, though this question is, it lies outside the scope of this paper, excepting at one point. If, as might be presumed, the answer to it in many cases would be in the affirmative, then an additional reason appears for giving the right kind of instruction from an early age gradually as youth progresses, and it brings into still further relief the dangers of reticence.

Such seem to be the evils with which

we have to deal. No attempt has been made to set them out in any detail. All that it is at present necessary to state by way of summary is (1) that it is an entire mistake to suppose that the systems of boarding-schools or day-schools or no schools at all are the *cause* of these evils. Bad management at school or neglect anywhere will of course foster them ; but a prolonged and careful study of boys, and a close consideration of each particular failure in its origin and development, lead irresistibly to the conclusion that children's minds in nine cases out of ten are so constituted that stray and piecemeal information given in the wrong tone breeds in them distorted and vicious imaginations, prompting to self-indulgence, and powerfully assisted by the physical sensations of bodily growth. (2) That while healthy ideas

previously implanted, and based on instincts of reverence and home affection, form an effectual antidote to such information, without them there is nothing to prevent morbid conceptions from being lodged deep down into the mind and being welcomed as the first enlightenment on a subject in which nature cannot for long tolerate ignorance. (3) That an inevitable result of this serious deficiency in home teaching is to undermine trust in parents. (4) That, without guidance, the notions formed of the meaning of bodily desires are selfish, and ultimately tend to produce a callous acquiescence in a tremendous social evil. (5) That the resulting mischief is enormously more prevalent than is commonly supposed. Certain huge facts in our social life stand out in awful prominence, and if reflected on indicate

a vast mass of unhealthy growth among the young ; much of this, experts know, is preventable : serious-minded people have for some time reached the conclusion that there is hope in fortifying the innocence of childhood with some kind of sound instruction. But there still prevails even among these a great deal of doubt and hesitation as to the giving of the instruction ; and to that problem I now address myself.

THE REMEDY

One or two broad principles may be laid down. The first is that matter is not evil. The time-honoured doctrine which affirms the contrary is, it is true, less confidently stated than formerly, and physical science with its revelation of the

nature of our bodies—scarcely less than Christian teaching as to their destiny—has saved us from any formulated heresy in these days. Yet it remains a fact that in the popular view of this subject there is much that tends to depreciate one of the greatest of all Divine or natural laws—the law of the propagation of life. To a lover of nature no less than to a convinced Christian the subject ought to wear an aspect not only negatively innocent but positively beautiful. It is a recurrent miracle and yet the very type and embodiment of law; and it may be confidently affirmed that in spite of the blundering of many generations there is nothing in a normally constituted child's mind which refuses to take in the subject from this point of view, *provided that the right presentation of it is the first.*

Nothing can be more important than this, since there is in every child a native curiosity concerning every revelation of life, which leads to the first teaching about maternity and generation being eagerly absorbed and firmly stamped upon the mind at its most receptive age. It is nothing short of appalling to realise this simple psychological fact, and then to reflect on the tone in which the chance instructors of our children handle these sacred themes — dirty-minded school-boys, grooms, garden boys, any one, in short, who at an early age may be sufficiently defiled and sufficiently reckless to talk of them. No matter what palliatives may be applied later on, the poison thus imbibed never quite leaves the system. The only exceptions to this rule are the very rare

cases in which the mind seems quite unable to take any interest in the matter: so innocent, in fact, as to be impenetrably dull; and children so safeguarded purchase moral immunity at the cost of a certain intellectual loss.

This, then, is the first principle to be grasped, that there is nothing in natural law which may not be spiritualised in its presentation to a child. The second is that the first presentation of this particular subject is the one which prevails over all others. 1.

The third principle concerns the procedure to be adopted. The teaching must not be isolated, but given simply as illustrating laws of nature about which something is already known. And if the facts are to be imparted so as to throw light upon other facts, the methods of 2.

teaching should be in no way peculiar, but the same as those which are found effectual in other subjects. Observation and reflection will generally tell us when a child begins to feel a curiosity about the fact of birth—when he silently discards the fables or myths with which his questions earlier in life were satisfied. The time, in the case of an ordinarily apprehensive mind, will be somewhere between eight and eleven years ; and it is no objection to this rule that some children in the upper classes pass through their teens in total and contented ignorance of the whole mystery. This discussion would never have arisen unless such children were the exception. We are considering the majority. And in proceeding from the known to the unknown we shall take into account that

the fact of maternity is much earlier guessed at than that of paternity. Therefore the teaching on the former ought to be made the starting-point for the teaching which deals with the latter, but of this I will speak again later.

There is, however, a certain divergence of opinion and practice which may be noticed here. It generally happens that if any recommendation as to sexual instruction is made by male writers emphasis is laid on the laws of generation and reproduction which are illustrated by plant life, and it is urged that the relation between these laws and those which govern generation and birth among human beings suggests an obvious method of instruction. So parents are advised to explain the fertilisation of plants and proceed to the facts of sex among human

beings. And assuredly this view commends itself to many who have had a scientific training; they have known something of the mental expansion and enlightenment which follow on the recognition of law in the universe, and they desire to make a young child a participator in their own gain. On the other hand, in the very few cases which have come to my notice in which the teaching of sexual facts has been carefully taken in hand either by the mother or the preparatory schoolmaster a different tone is adopted. Reference is made to the animal world just so far as the child's knowledge extends, so as to prevent the new facts from being viewed in isolation, but the main emphasis is laid on his feeling for his mother and the instinct which exists in nearly all children of reverence due to

the maternal relation ; in the hope that use may be made of the natural reserve which forbids a light and careless handling of this topic among school-boys. Of the two methods the former is more scientific, the latter the more personal, appealing to the deeper emotions of the child's heart. Which is the best?

In answering this some account must be taken of the prevailing shyness or reserve which exists between parents and children, especially on the father's side, in relation to such subjects as this. It might be supposed that the more scientific method of instruction would, from its *quasi*-impersonal character, be less difficult for a father to employ than the other, which inevitably leads him on to sacred ground. But in practice this would not be found to be the case. The

crux of the question is the personal application of the facts presented; and if that application is shirked the value of the lesson will be in many cases lost; the boy will learn some interesting botanical laws, but he will not connect them with human beings until he is a good deal older, and by that time the mischief will have been done. It is true a boy of scientific propensities and precocious reasoning power will connect the two subjects pretty readily at an early age—say, fourteen—but something more is required than simply correlation with other facts. Knowledge by itself may suggest counsels of prudence, but it has long ago been discovered by schoolmasters that prudential warnings by themselves are quite impotent against an imperious appetite of any kind. And if

a father, desirous of beginning with the easier part of the subject, adopts the botanical illustration in order to lead up to a personal appeal, he will find that his difficulty, when he comes to the point, has been very slightly diminished by the scientific preamble. Perhaps it may be thought that too much account is here taken of the shyness of a parent with his own son. Nevertheless it is really incontestable that this national characteristic has always been the grand obstacle to the giving of salutary instruction of this sort to the young.

The real answer to the question between the two methods is that they ought to be combined, and that by far the greater stress should be laid on the personal appeal, which certainly ought to precede any formal scientific teaching

about the propagation of life. It needs no deep psychology to prove this. Granted that a father's lesson about plant life is immeasurably better than the unclean hints gathered from other sources, which is all that most children have to be satisfied with at present; still such a lesson would be grievously defective in its power of appeal, because it would leave out of account the two greatest influences which a child is capable of feeling—religious reverence and his love for his mother; the first not necessarily, but very probably. It may be reasonably asserted that the wholesome impressions of childhood, which consciously and vividly last through life, are those made by one or both of these influences. And we want both.

The truth of these statements, how-

ever, will be easier to gauge if I now proceed to give more in detail the nature of the teaching which seems to be required.

At some time between eight and eleven years of age, in any case before a child leaves home, the fact of maternity should be explained. Probably he will know that as regards domestic animals there is some kind of law of offspring being born from the mother's body. In any case it is very easy to remind him of scattered facts, either within his cognisance or on the confines of it, which enable him to understand that this is a universal law. For a year or two in most cases, not in all, he will have been realising that there is some mystery about the matter, and that his nurse and parents have ceased to put off his

curiosity with tales of fairies, &c. So he is eager and fully prepared to hear that there is an explanation; and as far as the maternal side of the subject is concerned it should be simply stated, with emphasis laid on the suffering involved to his mother, and the wonderful fact given as a reason why the mother so dearly loves her son. And it would be well to go further and indicate the period of gestation, and explain the phrase in the Litany and some well-known passages in the Bible. It is a perfectly simple matter, and beyond all doubt a supremely natural process of instructing, and, as far as I know, never fails of its reward, to wit, a closer link of union between mother and child, and an implanting of a deep reverence in the child's mind for the greatest of all

natural laws and for the parental relation.

But this last phrase is anticipatory. It will at once be felt by some that as to paternity there is a difficulty in touching on the subject at so early an age as under eleven years. Possibly, also, the difficulty would be felt to be more acute in the case of girls. If, however, this part of the subject is to be postponed, the questions arise, How is the curiosity about the connexion between marriage and birth to be allayed? and, also, when is the supplementary teaching to be given? and, lastly, will the treatment be different in the case of children of different sexes?

I quite understand the idea that the more difficult part of the subject should be postponed. If left to the mother's instinct, probably this course would be

often adopted. But I conceive that it would be at a heavy cost. In the first place, there must be risk in presenting any truth in fragments. Of course it is necessary to present it in outline, but the outline should, if possible, be complete. To come to particulars, the best that could be done, if half of the truth is withheld, would be to say that after marriage God plants a seed in the mother which gradually grows into a child. But is it not obvious that this leaves great questions unanswered, or, rather, suggests a misleading answer? And, further, if, as I firmly believe, the result of the new knowledge is to deepen and hallow the child's natural feeling for his mother, it is a dangerous policy so to implant ideas that the bond which unites him to the mother is strength-

ened, while the relation with his father is weakened by being still left in the region of the unintelligible. One must remember that the impressions left on a child's mind at that age concerning a subject so vastly interesting and so intimate as this are very deep and permanent; and it seems as if his affection for the father might be impaired to some extent if any considerable time were allowed to pass before the child is allowed to think of him as the transmitter of his own physical life. The enlightened affection should be fairly divided, one would suppose, between the two parents, and, as the mother during childhood is necessarily in closer touch with the child than the father, it seems that of the two there is almost more need for the affection for his

father to be deepened by knowledge than his love for his mother. In addition to which the question is only postponed. When is it to be more suitably handled? The longer the postponement is, the more room is given for silent surmisings, which, as we have seen, lead either to gross misconceptions or prompt to bad talk; or, in the case of some peculiarly constituted natures, there is so little curiosity that the mind remains in blank, unenquiring ignorance for many years. But this can never be foreseen. The outline of instruction ought, in any case, to be completed before a boy goes to a school where there is any likelihood whatever of danger; that means at so early an age that there must always be a certain hesitation in the mind of an adult in conveying the first glimmer of

knowledge on the most delicate of all topics. In other words, if the teaching is ever to be complete, there are strong reasons for making it so, in outline, from the very first.

Thus, on reaching the point where the beginning of conception in the mother is explained, as indicated above, the parent can perfectly well add that the seed of life is entrusted by God to the father in a very wonderful way, and that after marriage he is allowed to give it to his wife, this being on his part an act of the love which first made him marry her. Seldom, I should fancy very seldom, would more than that be required, in the case of girl children. The only difference in the case of boys would be that quite simply and quite delicately use should so far be made of the innate

instinct as to indicate with distinctness what portion of his body will have the propagation of life entrusted to it as its natural function ; and, based on this instruction, an impressive and much needed warning may be given against misuse. I am inclined to think that this could be done in very simple language, without any reference being made to plants. The warning should be against meddling with something precious and sacred, and in most cases the reverential wonder felt by the child would be strong enough to prevent him from allowing himself to be drawn by any ignorant tempter into either evil talk or practices. Some, however, might find it useful to explain about the fertilization of plants in order to picture the mischief to either male or female if the organs were rudely

opened when the plant was still young. It would not die but would be robbed of its most wonderful endowment. This might be put simply, but it is unsafe to suppose that a child always sees analogies. In any case a promise would be exacted that the child would never do, or allow others to do if he could help it, anything that he would be ashamed of his mother knowing. And, more important still, he would be straitly charged to ask his mother and her alone, if x there were anything more which he wished to know, or was puzzled about.

So much for the latter years of childhood. I feel quite confident that up to the time of puberty this kind of enlightenment as to nature's laws and their meaning will nearly always be an adequate safeguard. If mothers only

knew how little effort the precaution costs and how grievous the danger which it meets, there would be no more hesitation as to this duty to their boy-children. The most distressing cases and the most deep-seated mischief that I have ever come across are those in which the vicious habit has been begun, not in boyhood but in childhood, and excepting in one very abnormal instance, the reason has been nothing but blind, helpless ignorance.

But when puberty comes on, the problem changes. We may assume that the early teaching has been effectual in saving the boy from evil imaginations as well as from sins of word and deed : and yet when the passions begin to be roused by bodily growth it is quite certain that fresh guidance will be needed. To begin

with, some years may have passed and the effect of the preliminary teaching may be partly worn away. So a very special supplementary warning is required, which, if possible, should be given by the father, and should take the form of an appeal to the boy's consciousness of germinating manhood; every effort being made, as in the previous talk, to inspire him with the feeling of the dignity of human life and of the laws of life. Not only is this a bracing and a wholesome tone to adopt, but it is so natural as to be almost easy, certainly as compared with the tone of mere warning, which by itself is full of the dangers of suggestion.

Thus the father could begin with directing the boy's thoughts to the greatness and wonder of human life as com-

pared with that of animals and vegetables, though even in the lower stages life is a glorious thing. And then let him lift the subject up to the fact beyond all facts of nature impressive, that the boy merely by becoming a man is to be entrusted with the power of transmitting this the greatest and most complete form of life that we know of in the world, and of calling into existence a being like himself, endowed with reason and will and spiritual faculties. This power has something creative about it and is that by which man seems to approach near to the life-giving Fatherhood of God. And then something could be said about the responsibility of this privilege in view of marriage some day, against which the boy is bound to preserve his treasure inviolate; and no matter what

effort it may cost, he must order his life and conduct as one who is going to be called to be a father and who should feel it an honour to safeguard his own purity for the wife whom he will some day choose. (This may sound premature at fourteen years old, but it could be slightly modified ; only let marriage as a future probability be mentioned thus early in some such terms so that the first associations with the word should be elevated and clean, not trivial and vulgar.) At this point the facts of plant life might be spoken of, or amplified from the previous talk.

This kind of teaching, which expands and explains what was only implied previously, would tend to put the lad into the right frame of mind for the formidable trials before him. Clearly a

good deal depends on the time being rightly chosen—just before the temptations begin.

During the years of childhood, indulgence in bad habits is not natural and would never take place, normally, except from ignorance. So we may be justified in assuming that the record will have been clean till the change in the constitution takes place called puberty, and the precise time of that in the case of any given boy could be discovered without fail by a doctor.

And yet it must be owned that, in spite of all precautions, not a few, probably, will temporarily succumb to the stormy physical trial: and if this is the case it must not be supposed that recovery will be speedy. But to prevent the statement being too darkly coloured,

I must add that there is an enormous difference in respect of the effects on character : first, if the habit is overcome before youth is over and is not allowed to continue into manhood ; secondly, if the lad keeps the secret to himself and only speaks of it to his parent or adviser. Under these conditions, which are secured to a great extent by the previous instruction, the harm done to the character is wonderfully less than would be supposed. Even without the instruction it is found that a boy brought up in a refined home will often keep the matter to himself ; but the danger is exceedingly great that at any moment his reserve may break down, and that in an absolutely defenceless state of mind he may court and catch contamination from any quarter and plunge into the worst

excesses, doing untold harm to himself and others. But, as already has been indicated, this is not the problem with which we are dealing. I will briefly consider how to treat the case of an ordinary boy who, in spite of careful teaching and refining influences, has begun to give way to self-defilement, but is of course anxious to free himself and is ready to listen to his father's advice.

It is of great importance that the lad be not depressed or frightened. Everything possible should be said and done to give him belief in himself and in his Maker. Nothing but harm comes of convincing a boy that he is a failure, and we do not want a lot of young Englishmen to be going about apologising for their own existence. So the first thing to do is to explain the meaning of temptation—

as in many cases God's method of training the character to be strong— and then to show how the young man preparing himself for life must know how to go forth to meet his boyish trials like a soldier advancing to battle, almost rejoicing that his enemy is strong because he feels sure that he can overcome him. Thus when he feels the approach of his foe he can recognize the call to use the strength within him that it may grow by conflict and victory: because he perceives that now is the moment when he is going to be further equipped for the warfare of life, and on it perhaps depends the question whether he will grow into a warrior or into a slave. He should be told that his will which he thinks weak is really quite strong enough for any number of trials, if only he knows

their meaning and is not frightened or fascinated by them.

Little need be said in the way of deterrent. If a father has once obtained an avowal of the fact, there is little doubt that in most cases the shame of it is felt and a few grave words about the sullyng of the thoughts and of the heart are all that is necessary, unless there is reason to believe that a certain callousness exists which must at all costs be broken though. Even then I doubt the wisdom of saying much about physical ill-effects, as to which considerable divergence of opinion exists among doctors. The exhortations should be of such a kind as to make the boy see the meaning of the trial, and the paramount importance not so much of being victorious as of being ever hopeful,

persevering, and resolute to do exactly what he is told by way of safeguard; and above all to put away the unclean thing from his thoughts and forget any failure that may occur as speedily as possible.¹

¹ It will be noticed that the suggestions made in the text are irrespective of any very definite religious views. This is simply because I am in hopes of appealing to a wider public than could be expected to understand or agree with any one presentment of Christianity. It is possible to do a great deal of good with boys in this matter, starting from nothing more than a belief in God. None the less I am bound to point out to all whom it may concern, i.e. only to those who are Church people, that the teaching and ordinances of the English Church, if understood and properly taught, are a potent aid to the enforcing of the principles indicated above.

Take a few instances. A boy ought to feel that he has a treasure of innocence to guard, and that defilement means defilement of something precious. This is exactly what is taught by the doctrine of baptism, and post-baptismal sin: the soiling of the robe of baptismal innocence. Again, all that is manly and inspiring in any advice that can be given him depends for its effect on how far it counteracts egoism and convinces him that he is strong. Can this ever be taught more effectively than at

During the time of struggle, it may be two or three years, someone should be

the time of confirmation, when he is led to believe that he has become a full member of a society to which the gift of spiritual strength has been definitely promised? The idea of membership leads him to look away from himself, and as to his power of resistance he can believe in it when he is told that he is a hundred times stronger than he knows, and that all that is required is that he should call upon the divine life within him, which by being used will increase more and more, but if not used will dwindle and die. Again, since the power of this temptation consists partly in the kind of mysterious glamour with which it is clothed, it must be set in a vivid and true light. It is no use telling a boy that it is a mere delusion; we have to account for it as a fact of real importance and change his whole conception of it, without in any way concealing the gravity of the sin: for it is the undoing of the relation, into which he has been placed by baptism, with Christ, whose character he is learning to love.

But along with this he may come to feel that all trial, bravely faced, is the means whereby the union between himself and his Master is to be cemented. And so, as is taught by the opening words of St. James's Epistle, and by the lives lived by many saints, the strong men of the world are those who have overcome temptations, the weak those who have had none to fight against. And here the story of the temptation of Christ, as showing that by His brotherhood with us our nature is capable of heroism,

in possession of the lad's confidence, father, doctor, or schoolmaster, so as to

comes in most fittingly. The position in which the lad finds himself is ennobled and purified. Again, as to the precautions suggested in the text, Christianity teaches us that our own efforts *without* trust (an easier word than faith) in God are vain; but that *with* trust they are indispensable. This will guard him from arrogant self-reliance on the one hand, and fatalism after recurrent failure: both tempers being very common. Again, there is the Holy Communion at frequent intervals, with its self-examination and repentance, and the certainty assured to the struggling young Christian that, as long as his endeavours are honest and his repentance sincere, the promised forgiveness is a fact, even though he does not yet feel it. Failure, however prolonged, is thus partly explained. The keenness of the sorrow becomes an encouragement; and even despair can be interpreted as the abandonment of self-trust, the preliminary to the full reliance on Christ's word. Indeed, I must admit that I have been astonished at the admirable adaptability of the Church's ordinances and teaching to the needs of lads battling with their first great temptation.

Confirmation is of course the time when schoolmasters get to learn something of the graver side of boy life, and the reason why it is so precious to them is that it allows them to rely on sound and bracing thoughts instead of barren denunciation and abortive appeals to the will, which the boy knows perfectly well is too weak for the work it has to do.

prevent him from becoming disheartened or reckless, and to give him such quasi-medical advice as may be required. Moderation in food, especially in the evening, constant employment for the thoughts, good novels to read, abstinence from wine, alertness in getting up in the morning as soon as sleep goes ; these and similar precautions are likely to be useful in many cases. It is of course important to get the boy to do something by way of safeguard in which he thoroughly believes.

A nebulous pietism which is very common nowadays, and on which I have relied in my time, is a sort of temporary assistance to moral endeavour. But it fails at a pinch, as the hope it suggests has no foundation in anything the boy has learnt ; and it robs him of the priceless conviction that there is some direct connexion between the religion of his childhood and his daily life. And if he is to feel that, he must learn the meaning of repentance, forgiveness, and renewal, in respect of his struggles towards purity of mind.

One of the symptoms by which a parent may be guided is the strength of the appetite for food at an early age, before bodily growth begins to be rapid. If this appetite is very marked in a child of ten or eleven years, it is almost certain that the physical temptation later will be very strong; and some measures should be taken to assist him to learn that no matter how imperious an appetite may be, it is given that it may be controlled, and that there is a dignity in being master of the body which is worth every effort to secure. In a short time the boy will be old enough to learn that the true beauty and honour of the body lie in the fact of its being a willing and obedient servant to spirit.

But excepting in the one symptom of a precocious appetite for food, I doubt if

there are any indications which will enable even an experienced man to be certain that a boy is not beginning to contract the habit.

In the early stages no safe inference can be drawn from the expression or demeanour, or even the early home training. There is something extraordinarily stealthy and uncertain about the attacks of this particular foe, and though by seventeen or eighteen years of age a few of the most select are so transparently upright and guileless as to make one morally certain that all is right, yet even in their case this could not be felt at fourteen or fifteen. It is well *never* to take immunity for granted at the time of puberty. Broadly it may be surmised that the strong, healthy, athletic boys have generally the strongest temp-

tation, but seem to have also most power of resistance. Emotional and sometimes precociously religious boys are found to be in sad trouble from it. But on the whole there is no rule, and the best plan is to definitely ask the question. This can be easily and effectively done if it is not put as an accusation, but as an offer of help. And even this rule requires qualification. Where it is known that the boy has a strong will and high principle, no one can be sure that he is quite free from taint, but it may fairly be assumed that when the knowledge of the meaning of the temptation has been given him, he will himself be able to master it. To distinguish the boys who may be safely left to themselves from those who are weak, or rather, callous, is very difficult for a school-master, but

generally, I think, could be done by a parent.

Having gone so far I wish once again to notice the great difficulty that still stands in our way. It is the shyness of parents, especially of fathers. Many of them feel that, no matter what the arguments may be, they cannot and will not approach this topic with their sons. There is something in the paternal and filial relation which gives some countenance to this misgiving, and shyness is pre-eminently one of those obstacles to social action against which argument is sure to be in vain. But I feel sure that the *first* opening of the mind to the law of the transmission of life should be made by the mother—that is to say, if it is thoroughly understood that the teaching is to be really teaching and not merely

a barren warning against bad talk, &c., at school or elsewhere. And that the mother should undertake this task will not be felt to be unfitting if it is remembered that the right age of the child for it is as early as between eight and eleven years. At any rate it seems to me not unlikely that if once the conditions under which a little boy's mind faces this subject were clearly apprehended there would be many mothers found both willing and able to lay the foundations of sound true knowledge according to the principles here indicated. They would find it easier than the fathers, perhaps, for the simple reason that the elementary facts of life and birth are not in their minds interwoven with low and depraved memories. Men, as I have shown, have been severely dealt with by Nature in this respect ; she

has forced them, at a time of life when their minds are ill-compacted, their ideas chaotic, and their wills untrained, to face an ordeal which demands above all things reverence based on knowledge and resolution sustained by high affections. An enormously large proportion flounder blindly into the mire before they know what it is, not necessarily, but very often into the defilement of evil habit, but still more often into the tainted air of diseased opinion, and after a few years some of them emerge saved, but so as by fire. And who can wonder at their great reluctance to introduce, in any way, their own sons to a branch of knowledge which in their own case meant the loss for ever of the 'visionary gleam, the glory and the dream' of early innocence? It would be well if they could reflect that the very

unhappiness of their own experience ought to be the stimulus to them to put away in so vital a matter the uneasy reserve common to Englishmen, and deal with these great natural laws as part of God's revelation of His working in the world, instead of inventions of Satan. But meantime it must always be easier, and certainly more appropriate, for the mother to begin the teaching in a subject which by the tender mercy of Providence is still viewed by them with clear, open eyes and unembarrassed minds. As a consequence of the lenity Nature shows to girls we have in mothers a great store of pure and invigorating influence, and in the active exercise of it on boys the one hope of our race lies of making strong head against the tide of this evil. But whether it be father or mother who

undertakes to speak, it should be remembered always that the uneasiness which adults feel in handling these topics is simply the result of experience of life, to which the child is at present an entire stranger. He does not dream of the sad histories which have been brought to the knowledge of his parents, and cause them to quail and hesitate; and so far from feeling anything like perplexity as at something intrusive or ill-timed or unnatural, his little mind is a *tabula rasa* on which these first impressions can be written without the slightest difficulty, with all requisite firmness and tenderness combined. Indeed there is something awe-inspiring in the innocent readiness of little children to learn the explanation of by far the greatest fact within the horizon of their minds. The way they

receive it, with native reverence, truthfulness of understanding, and guileless delicacy, is nothing short of a revelation of the never ceasing bounty of Nature, who endows successive generations of children with this instinctive ear for the deep harmonies of her laws. People sometimes speak of the indescribable beauty of children's innocence, and insist that there is nothing which calls for more constant thanksgiving than their influence on mankind. But I will venture to say that no one quite knows what it is who has foregone the privilege of being the first to set before them the true meaning of life and birth and the mystery of their own being. Not only do we fail to build up sound knowledge in them, but we put away from ourselves the chance of learning something that must be divine.

By way of a tentative suggestion I would point out that there seems to be a natural division of labour between the two parents. Suppose the mother takes upon herself to lay the foundations of the knowledge at about eight or nine years of age : there remains a necessary caution to be given to boys towards the time of puberty, which, properly speaking, ought to be somewhat medical in character, and this would seem to be the part either of the father or of some trustworthy doctor. In a fairly large number of cases, after the early teaching, a very slight hint would be sufficient.

But, as regards the early elementary teaching, it is the practice, apparently, at the present time for many parents to shift the duty on to the shoulders either of

the family doctor or of the preparatory schoolmaster.

This means that in many cases nothing whatever is said by any one. And even if care is taken to see that either one or the other takes the responsibility I trust that any reader who has followed me thus far will feel that, no matter who the deputy may be, however skilful and experienced, however earnest, however refined, yet there is an immediate sure and incalculable loss as soon as ever the parent delegates the duty to any one. In the case of ordinary teaching of ordinary subjects it soon becomes manifest to any observer that very much depends on how a thing is said, and still more on who says it. In all teaching which has for its object the raising of the child's view of life, the enlargement of

his horizon, or the bracing of his moral tone—and all teaching ought to be of this kind—it is certain that one man may repeat an excellent form of words without producing one-tenth of the impression that another produces who has not framed his sentences so neatly or prepared his words so carefully. And when one thinks of the character of the particular teaching under consideration, how it appeals to the whole being of the child, and is meant to uplift his ideas of religion and of nature, as well as to enlighten his conscience and nerve his will, and further how surely it depends for its success on the loving enlistment of his deepest and purest affections, I confess that there is to me something almost of a profanity in the idea that a doctor or a schoolmaster can stand in this matter *in*

loco parentis. It is true that in one sense the instruction is singularly easy to give ; but none the less the importance of its being given in the best possible way, with the fullest power that belongs to a parent only, cannot be overstated.

And yet, if in any case, for some reason or other, it is not possible for a parent to take the task in hand, then beyond all question it is better that some friend should do so rather than that it should be left undone. In one or two cases which I have heard of, great earnestness and tact have been devoted to the performance of the duty, and in spite of all inevitable drawbacks real good has been done.

But in the case of a large number of men and women who have undertaken the solemn responsibility of bringing fresh young lives into the world I am

not without hope that they may give a fair consideration to this question, and if so I am quite certain that they will see the need of conquering their hesitation and of acting somewhat on the lines here laid down. Some will always be too careless or too lazy to master the subject, and from this class will continue to spring a stock of unsteady and wayward children. There may be others, and among them the best people in the country, who are disposed to trust to the general good atmosphere which they hope to maintain in their own homes rather than to any direct instruction. They may also rely on the unquestionable fact that England in the past has produced high-minded and pure-hearted men, though there never has been nearly so much talk about parental duties as there is now. And yet unless

a great many careful observers are wrong, there is a certain urgency of need at the present day which has perhaps not existed before. There are some reasons for supposing that the most startling symptoms of unnatural social corruption which manifest themselves to careful observers of to-day were not to be discerned a century ago; and anyhow, in this question, to lull ourselves into security by a contemplation of England's past history is an idle kind of optimism. We know of some of our forbears who passed unscathed through boyhood and youth, but what of those who succumbed? And how if the ordeal for our children is becoming more acute than it was for them? But I would ask all who are inclined to some such acquiescence as this, and also the increasing class who would fain do

something to fortify their sons against peril, simply to give an attentive consideration to the matter from these two points of view: First, that such building up of a child's ideas as is here suggested is not only an uplifting of his mind, but a strengthening of the bond which links him to his father and mother, and which is after all the one great stay for him throughout his life. Secondly, that as regards the child's actual trials there is a good hope in what has been urged: it is that when once the knowledge shall have been implanted in his mind, bound up with and hallowed by thoughts which make his home dear and sacred to him, and recalling to him the greatest and best thing he has yet known, his mother's love of him and his parents' love for each other, at least one grand issue will be secured. He will feel that

any rude handling of such a theme, even of only its outer fringe, is like the profaning of the Holy of Holies in his heart, and he will no more suffer it than he would suffer a stranger to defile the innermost shrine of his feelings by taking his mother's or his sister's name in vain. All the goading curiosity which drives other boys to pry greedily into nature's laws, in blank ignorance of their mighty import, their unspeakable depth and spiritual, unearthly harmonies, has been for him forestalled, enlightened, and purified. He has learnt the first great lesson of the religion of love, and what God has cleansed he will not call common or unclean.

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